Spectrum of Hope a Gift to Regent Park from Local Youth, a Powerful Story of Neighbourhood Pride and Creative Collaboration

September 15, 2014

TORONTO—Today, the **Thompson T. Egbo-Egbo Arts Foundation** released a new music video for ***Spectrum of Hope***, a musical creation by **Mustafa Ahmed**, better known as **Mustafa the Poet**, a rising urban music star from the Regent Park neighbourhood. **Spectrum of Hope**, based on an original poem about **Daniels Spectrum**, a community cultural hub in Regent Park, involved the creative teamwork of seven local Regent Park youth, who co-directed the video in a year-long collaboration with Toronto creative studio **Twice Upon a Time**. The result is a powerful expression of pride in the East-side neighbourhood currently undergoing a revitalization led by Toronto Community Housing with development partner The Daniels Corporation.

The music video, a work of art "for Regent Park by Regent Park," was conceived as a gift to the neighbourhood's many thousands of residents by **Thompson Egbo-Egbo**, an internationally-known, genre-defying pianist and President of the Thompson T. Egbo-Egbo Arts Foundation. With a strong sense of community pride, the potent visual concepts complement Mustafa the Poet's lyrics, which tell a story of urban experience unique to the Regent Park neighbourhood, which is located within the oldest community housing project in Toronto.

"We wanted to make sure the piece was 100% authentic," says Twice Upon a Time co-director **Nicole Beals**. "That meant letting the youth guide the entire creative process." Before even picking up a camera the young artists spent the first three months methodically identifying the themes they wanted to explore. Seventeen-year-old **Nejat Khalid** says, "People are afraid of what they don't know. Other communities think Regent Park is all about violence and gangs. It's not like that at all. We wanted to show our passion and diversity. We hope people feel a connection with our neighbourhood through this video."

Spectrum of Hope was made possible through the efforts of several artists and organizations. **Thompson Egbo-Egbo** was proud to be a mentor in the program, as well as a musical contributor, saying, "I'm amazed by the creativity and artistic talent coming out of Regent Park, and I want to do all that I can to make sure the world hears about it. Through my foundation, I work on projects that support the artistic inspiration and education of children and youth. This new video is such a wonderful example of what can happen from youth working together."

Other organizations involved in the project include **The Daniels Corporation**, which provided crucial funding for the video's production. The making of the video was based out of the popular community cultural hub **Daniels Spectrum** located at 585 Dundas Street East and operated by **Artscape**. Many of the young artists involved in *Spectrum of Hope* are also participants in the **Ada Slaight Youth Arts Mentorship Program**, run by Artscape.

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Media Inquiries

Artscape is pleased to act as the main media contact on this occasion and raise awareness for this great collective effort. For interviews with any of the parties mentioned above, please contact:

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BACKGROUNDER

About the Thompson T. Egbo-Egbo Arts Foundation

The Egbo Arts Foundation provides a chance for children to express themselves through the arts, and assist them to develop positive attributes that will enable them to enrich their own lives and make positive contributions to their community. The Thompson T. Egbo-Egbo Arts Foundation has created Evolving Through the Arts program, and exposes students to rhythm and music, encourages them to create and/or learn lyrics, and to explore and develop performance sills that are showcased in public.

About Twice Upon a Time

With the launch of ***Spectrum of Hope***, creative studio **Twice Upon a Time** is announcing its new business and website. The Toronto/New York creative studio produces short-form branded documentaries for purpose-driven companies with meaningful messages.

About Daniels Spectrum

Daniels Spectrum is a 60,000-square foot community cultural hub in Toronto's Regent Park neighbourhood. It is operated by Artscape, a not-for-profit urban development organization that makes space for creativity and transforms communities. Daniels Spectrum is home to innovative cultural organizations and buzzes with creative activity. Its popular event spaces host thousands each year. For more information, visit **regentparkarts.ca** and follow **@regentparkarts**.

About Artscape

Artscape is a not-for-profit urban development organization that makes space for creativity and transforms communities. Artscape's work involves clustering creative people together in real estate projects that serve the needs of the arts and cultural community and advance multiple public policy objectives, private development interests, community and neighbourhood aspirations and philanthropic missions. For more information see www.torontoartscape.org.

About the Ada Slaight Youth Arts Mentorship Program

This outstanding program started in 2013 thanks to a multi-year contribution from The Slaight Family Foundation. It offers aspiring youth artists from the Regent Park community an opportunity to learn about a career in the arts and tap into their creativity. More than 1,000 young people took part in the

program in 2013, making the inaugural year a great success. The program includes multiple components: ACCESS Tickets: free tickets to arts and cultural events across Toronto; capacity-building workshops; "In Conversation with…" sessions with international rising stars; and a mentorship program in which mentees are paired with industry mentors in their fields for five months, allowing them to explore the realities of working as professional artists. For more information, contact the Managing Director of Daniels Spectrum, Seema Jethalal, at seema@torontoartscape.on.ca.